

SUCCESS STORY TO State of Michigan MiRSA December 2007
Southeast Michigan Information Security Regional Skills Alliance (RSA)

Southeast Michigan consists of an eight county region that encompasses more than half of Michigan's population and is home to a diverse technology industry. Amidst the state's high unemployment, layoffs, and plant closings, Automation Alley, a not-for-profit technology consortium that focuses the region's workforce and business development initiatives, is convener of the SE Michigan Information Security Regional Skills Alliance (RSA). The RSA is stepping up to the plate in meeting information security workforce challenges brought on by the evolution of information security technology and globalization of the economy.

Automation Alley was awarded the designation of Michigan Regional Skills Alliance (MiRSA) convener in December 2005 by the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth. As part of the MiRSA program, this RSA is bringing together key leaders from public and private sectors in business, education, labor, government and workforce and economic developers to partner in assessing and solving information security issues. Under the leadership of Karen Thompson Nickerson, Manager Information Security RSA, the RSA has grown to 72 partnerships with 160 participants who have contributed to the RSA's success. The RSA has regularly brought to its meetings high-level speakers including National Security Agency Representative Richard Marshall, representatives from the British Standards Institute, as well as RSA partners who are experts in the security field. Having met initial RSA goals, it is continuing to focus on a trained and skilled IA workforce in Homeland Security and Health Care industries through educational initiatives and training delivery.

With the understanding that employers play a key role in a regional skill alliance's success, the RSA recently prepared and implemented a first of its kind IA Employer Survey to gauge the state of the region's information security industry. To help defray the costs of the survey, Thompson secured a sponsorship from Intellitrends, a market research and strategy company. This survey is a key to the RSA's agenda to assist employers in their efforts to building secure corporate environments. The compiled data will be posted on the RSA's Web site, www.automationalley.com/mirsa and a White Paper will be published. The Web site has been recognized by the State of Michigan as a premier example of a MiRSA Web site and will be used as a model for other regional skill alliances to follow.

Partnering with Michigan Works!, the RSA is launching a security training program to retrain incumbent workers as well as train the unemployed and future workforce. For the three-year grant period, SE Michigan regional MichiganWorks! Agencies have designated \$1,280,000 in cash contributions and \$34,000 in-kind contributions to help with the training. The RSA encourages businesses to evaluate their security risk level and has provided business risk assessment sessions donated in-kind from IA expert and RSA partner Dr. Dan Shoemaker. Automation Alley is also having its own security system assessed through an in-kind contribution by RSA partner RazorThreat, and will serve as an example of good security practices for SE Michigan's business community.

The RSA's vision is to become the recognized channel for employers, educators/trainers and employees seeking information on security career pathway ladders and training needed for security occupations. It is also identifying emerging job classifications that can be incorporated into Michigan's education and training systems, creating opportunities for new and current members of the workforce. It has identified educational and training institutions in SE Michigan that offer IA programs, and its K-20+ Committee is helping to provide accurate and timely information to the region's future workforce—K-20+ students.

To enhance National Security efforts in ensuring accurate, efficient and secure flow of information, the SE Michigan Information Security Regional Skill Alliance's vision is to develop and maintain the highest trained and skilled IA workforce, not only in Michigan, but in the nation.

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